



**STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**ELECTION REFORM NEEDS TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO VOTE,
NOT DISENFRANCHISE CITIZENS**

Ever since Republicans first proposed the idea of requiring people to show a photo identification in order to vote at the polls on Election Day, it has been sold as a way to eliminate fraud and restore honesty to the electoral process.

What these advocates fail to tell you is that they are supporting a system that surely will deny some Hoosiers their right to vote.

On the surface, this seems simple enough. Present your driver's license and you can vote. Who couldn't meet that requirement?

People who live at nursing homes and no longer drive, for one. Women who have married and changed their names, because their driver's licenses will not match their voter registration files. Minorities who have had to face many barriers in the past to their efforts to vote.

Under the guise of so-called "voting reform," Republicans are taking the first step in disenfranchising voters. It is a solution to a problem that does not exist, except in the minds of those who wish to protect political gains by preventing others from voting.

Consider the cases of electoral fraud that have occurred in recent years in Indiana. They all have involved absentee ballots. The Republican proposal fails to address this issue.

As the Republicans have advanced this proposal, they have failed to provide a single instance where electoral fraud in Indiana has occurred at a polling site.

What they will create is an atmosphere where people will be prevented from exercising their right to vote. It will be more difficult to vote in Indiana than it was in Iraq, where a person simply had to dip a finger into a bowl of ink in order to exercise that right.

House Democrats have attempted to focus the need for electoral reform in the right area.

We have offered amendments that require any person who does not have a photo ID to sign an affidavit that swears the voter's name and address are correct. The same requirement would be made for any person who fills out an absentee ballot at a local clerk's office. This affidavit would clearly state the penalties for lying: a fine of \$10,000 and 18 months in prison. All affidavits would be sent to the county prosecutor and the grand jury.

This provision would have helped give Indiana the toughest photo ID legislation in the country. However, it was rejected by the House Republicans.

Having a photo ID does not affect members of the Indiana General Assembly. We are provided them free of charge. The vast majority of voters have photo IDs and they should be required to show them. Those who do not have photo ID when they are at the polls should not lose the right to vote if they are willing to sign an affidavit that would cost them \$10,000 and 1 ½ years in prison if it is proven to be false.

House Democrats support clean, honest and open elections. House Democrats are also in favor of making sure everyone who can vote is able to vote and have their ballots counted.

Ed Mahern has served as 97th District representative in the Indiana House since 1996.